



## In the headlines:

- Protecting rights and dignity of indigenous peoples 'is protecting everyone's rights' – UN
- Expert concludes review of new information on death of former-UN chief Dag Hammarskjöld
- With devastating impact on civilians, conflict is 'major cause of famine' – UN Security Council
- Syria: UN relief wing voices concern about civilians caught in crossfire in Raqqa city
- Guterres appoints British journalist to lead UN global communications department

## Protecting rights and dignity of indigenous peoples 'is protecting everyone's rights' – UN

**9 August** – Ten years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, progress in several countries has been made in formally recognizing indigenous peoples, but overwhelmingly they continue to face discrimination, marginalization and major challenges in enjoying their basic rights.

“While indigenous peoples have made significant advancements in advocating for their rights in international and regional fora, implementation of the Declaration is impeded by persisting vulnerability and exclusion, and exclusion, particularly among indigenous women, children, youth and persons with disabilities,” said 40 UN system entities and other international organizations in a joint UN statement, issued on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, marked annually on 9 August.



A H/mong hill tribe woman in a village of Sin Chai, Sapa, Viet Nam. Women's labour accounts for the two-thirds of subsistence agriculture in developing countries, yet they often have no rights over the land. UN Photo/Kibae Park

The Declaration, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007, establishes a universal framework of minimum survival standards for the dignity and well-being of the world's indigenous peoples. It is the most comprehensive international instrument on indigenous peoples' collective rights, including the rights to self-determination, traditional lands and culture.

### *Declaration on indigenous rights stands as “beacon of progress”*

“The Declaration, which took more than twenty years to negotiate, stands today as a beacon of progress, a framework for reconciliation and a benchmark of rights,” underscored Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Mariam Wallei Aboubakrine, Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a joint statement on the Day.

“But a decade on, we need to acknowledge the vast challenges that remain. In too many cases, indigenous peoples are now facing even greater struggles and rights violations than they did ten years ago,” they added.

Although some countries have taken constitutional and legislative measures to recognize their rights and identities, exclusion, marginalization and violence continue to be widespread.

With this in mind, Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said that as custodians and practitioners of unique cultures and relationships with the natural environment, indigenous peoples embody a wide range of linguistic and cultural diversity at the heart of our shared humanity.

“Protecting their rights and dignity is protecting everyone's rights and respecting humanity's soul, past and future,” she said, noting that UNESCO's latest *Global Education Monitoring Report* provides concrete guidance and policy advice for the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights. The agency also launched the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme in 2002 to support governments in creating synergies between scientific and indigenous peoples' knowledge.

### ***Voice and empowerment of indigenous women “more important than ever”***

For its part, the UN labour agency said the international community must also renew its commitment to promote the empowerment and voice of indigenous women, according to a

While commending the tenth anniversary of the Declaration, along with its own Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) as instruments guiding public policy and empowering “indigenous communities to pursue their own development priorities,” the International Labour Organization's (ILO) underscored that the situation is far from acceptable.

“Indigenous peoples constitute a disproportionate 15 per cent of the world's poor whereas they are an estimated five per cent of the world's population. Indigenous women are commonly the poorest of the poor, discriminated against because they are indigenous and because they are women,” ILO stressed in a statement.

The statement pointed out that their marginalization and social exclusion must be addressed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda.

“Our combined efforts – governments, employers' and workers' organizations, indigenous peoples and their organizations, UN partners and others – can go a long way in ensuring that indigenous peoples are not left behind,” concluded the ILO statement.

### ***Marking the International Day***

As Indigenous experts from Canada, Republic of the Congo, Ecuador and Namibia will celebrate the Day at a special event at UN Headquarters in New York, UN offices globally are also holding events and activities, including in Australia, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

The UN partnered with Twitter to create a special emoji for the Day, which, with the hashtags #WeAreIndigenous and #IndigenousDay, will be live from 8 August to 15 September as “a new way to engage broader audiences in promoting indigenous peoples' rights.”

## Expert concludes review of new information on death of former-UN chief Dag Hammarskjöld



Portrait of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. UN Photo/JO (file)

**9 August** – The United Nations today received an expert report that summarizes the new information made available by Member States and other sources and assesses whether and to what degree that information helps to establish the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic deaths of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and 15 others traveling with him.

Mr. Hammarskjöld served as the top UN official from April 1953 until his death at the age of 56 in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, along with 15 others in September 1961.

According to an information note issued by the Office of the UN Spokesperson, the report, presented by Mohamed Chande Othman, former Chief Justice of Tanzania, to Secretary-General António Guterres, sets out findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Mr. Othman was appointed by Mr. Guterres in February 2017 and is familiar with this matter from his role as Chair of the 2015 Independent Panel of Experts, which concluded, among other things, that there was significant new information with sufficient probative value to further pursue aerial attack or other interference as a hypothesis of the possible cause of the crash.

Since Mr. Othman's appointment, the UN chief has urged Member States to disclose, declassify or allow access to information that they may have regarding the tragic 1961 plane crash.

Mr. Othman's new mandate was to review potential new information, assess its probative value and determine the scope that any further investigation should take. The mandate also allows him, if possible, to draw conclusions from the investigations already conducted, including by the 2015 Independent Panel of Experts and the 2013 Hammarskjöld Commission.

The Secretary-General will transmit Mr. Othman's report to the General Assembly before the end of its seventy-first session and report on progress made.

## With devastating impact on civilians, conflict is 'major cause of famine' – UN Security Council

**9 August** – Expressing its grave concern about the threat of famine facing some 20 million people in conflict-affected Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-east Nigeria, the United Nations Security Council today requested the Secretary-General to provide early warning when a conflict could lead to famine.

Through the adoption of a Presidential Statement, the 15-member body also requested the Secretary-General to provide an oral briefing in October 2017 on impediments to an effective response to the risk of famine in these countries, and make specific recommendations on how to address country-specific impediments in order to enable a more robust short- and long-term response.

The Council emphasized, with deep concern, that ongoing conflicts and violence are “a major cause of famine” as they have devastating humanitarian consequences and hinder an effective humanitarian



A mother holds up an empty cooking pot as she crouches alongside her daughter inside their makeshift home at a settlement near the town of Ainabo, Somalia, Thursday 9 March 2017. Photo: UNICEF/Kate Holt

response in the short, medium and long term.

Deploring that in these four countries, certain parties have “failed to ensure unfettered and sustained access” for deliveries of vital food assistance as well as other forms of humanitarian aid, the Council reiterated its calls on all parties to allow the safe, timely and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance to all areas and to facilitate access for essential imports of food, fuel and medical supplies into each country, and their distribution throughout.

The Council further urged all parties to protect civilian infrastructure which is critical to the delivery of humanitarian aid in the affected countries.

The Council expressed its readiness to continue to support the Secretary-General's call to action to avert famine in conflict-affected countries and commits to engage constructively on his specific recommendations.

## Syria: UN relief wing voices concern about civilians caught in crossfire in Raqqa city



Displaced children and adults in Syria are seen in a vehicle after fleeing from ISIL-controlled areas in rural Raqqa to Ain Issa, the main staging point for displaced families, some 50 kilometres north of Raqqa city. Photo: UNICEF/Delil Soulaïman

**9 August** – The United Nations humanitarian wing is deeply concerned about the safety and protection of the thousands of civilians inside Raqqa city, many of them women and children, who are caught in the crossfire of the ongoing conflict, a UN spokesperson said today.

“The humanitarian community is assisting displaced people – and host communities – in at least 46 sites, camps or areas of high concentration of internally displaced people in the area, and they are reaching over 263,000 people with some form of assistance in July,” Spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters at the regular Headquarters press briefing in New York.

He added that assistance includes various types of food, including daily rations of bread, medicines and medical supplies, as well as nutrition assistance.

The offensive to retake Raqqa city from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) began two months ago. Ground fighting and airstrikes in and around the city have led to mass displacement and a deterioration of the humanitarian situation inside the city.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), an estimated 10,000 to 25,000 people remain trapped in the city, although exact figures remain difficult to verify due to the situation on the ground.

“Access to Raqqa is not currently possible for the UN, due to the fighting on the ground,” Mr. Dujarric said, reminding all military actors of their obligations to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access, in line with international humanitarian law.

## Guterres appoints British journalist to lead UN global communications department

**9 August** – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Alison Smale, a British journalist, to head the Organization's Department of Public Information as Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

Ms. Smale succeeds Cristina Gallach, of Spain, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for her commitment and dedicated service to the Organization.

Chief of Bureau of *The New York Times* in Berlin since 2013, Ms. Smale brings to the position almost 40-years of journalism experience gained in an international career that has included holding some of the most prestigious posts in the profession.



Alison Smale is the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, United Nations Department of Public Information.  
Photo: YouTube/Hertie School of Governance

She has a proven track record as reporter, editor and senior leader. Appointed Executive Editor of the International Herald Tribune (IHT) Paris, in 2008, she is the first and only woman to have held that post.

Ms. Smale went to the IHT in 2004 as Managing Editor from The New York Times, where she had been Deputy Foreign Editor since 2002, having joined The Times in 1998 as Weekend Foreign Editor.

Earlier in her career Ms. Smale reported for United Press International and The Associated Press as Bureau Chief for Central and Eastern Europe, Vienna (1986-1998) and Correspondent, Moscow and Bonn (1983-1986, 1978-1983).

Ms. Smale studied in Bristol, Munich and at Stanford University and holds a Bachelor of Arts in German and Politics, and an Master of Arts in Journalism. In 2009 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Law from Bristol University.